

COMING HOME

(THEME MUSIC UP AND UNDER)

**THE AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
PRESENTS *COMING HOME* – FROM THE SERIES *EXPERIENCING WAR*.**

(:30 excerpts from historians and Jeanne Markle)

**THESE STORIES COME STRAIGHT FROM THE MOUTHS OF AMERICA'S
WAR VETERANS AND THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES ON THE
HOMEFRONT. *COMING HOME* IS MADE POSSIBLE BY DISABLED
AMERICAN VETERANS CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST.**

I'M MAX CLELAND.

(:20)

(THEME MUSIC ENDS)

**FROM WORLD WAR ONE TO THE PERSIAN GULF, AMERICA'S WAR
VETERANS AND CIVILIANS ARE SHARING THEIR AUDIO, VIDEO, AND
WRITTEN MEMOIRS WITH THE VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT.
IT IS THE LARGEST ROUNDUP OF FIRST PERSON NARRATIVE SINCE
THE WORK PROGRAMS OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION. THE PROJECT
WAS CREATED AND IS SUPPORTED BY THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS,
WITH MAJOR FUNDING FROM AARP. THIS GROWING TREASURE
TROVE OF STORIES SPANS EIGHT DECADES.**

I AM A VETERAN OF THE VIETNAM WAR. I VOLUNTEERED IN 1967 AND SERVED UNTIL A GRENADE EXPLOSION TOOK MY LEGS AND MY RIGHT ARM. I WENT ON TO SERVE MY COUNTRY AS A FORMER HEAD OF THE UNITED STATES VETERANS ADMINISTRATION UNDER PRESIDENT CARTER; LATER AS A MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE FROM GEORGIA; AND A PROUD CO-SPONSOR OF THE BILL TO ESTABLISH THE VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT. I AM HONORED TO BE A PART OF THIS SERIES OF AMERICAN VOICES TELLING THEIR OWN STORIES, FOR IT PAINTS AN INTIMATE PICTURE OF OUR COUNTRY'S HISTORY - AND THE CHANGING CHARACTER AND NATURE OF WARFARE. IN THIS PROGRAM, WE'LL LISTEN AS A NATION REMEMBERS - COMING HOME.

[THEME MUSIC OUT]

Earl Poynter: It was in November of 19 and 45 and I won't forget our trip home. Seeing my name on the roster and getting on the ship.// And I won't forget, crossing the international dateline we had two Thanksgiving days.

EARL RAY POYNTER SERVED AS A FIRST SERGEANT IN THE ARMY'S 182ND INFANTRY DIVISION DURING WORLD WAR II. HE HAS FOND MEMORIES OF HIS JOURNEY HOME.

[Music up and under] "Sentimental Journey"

Earl Poynter: // ... final night in Japan was a blast because we knew we was going home and the war was ended. Anyway, we crossed the international dateline // and approached Seattle, Washington. I'll never forget Dinah Shore singing "Sentimental Journey" coming up the Seattle Strait. And all the lights. We hadn't seen lights like that in ages. And our first trip up the Pudget Sound, snow and sleet and Dinah Shore singing and oh it was heaven.

James Walsh: I'm James F. Walsh. I joined the army in Chicago in February, 1951.

// They shipped me from Seattle and then two weeks across to Japan and then boom, the next thing you know I was in Korea and I was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division and the 35th regimental combat team. //

//When I got there the truce talks were in the initiating processes// so I thought the war was going to be over, but all of a sudden, boom, we were involved in two big attacks, the battle for the outpost and the battle for hill 440. I was made a gunner within two or three weeks.//

**WALSH WAS PART OF A GROUP OF SOLDIERS WHO DUG TRENCHES
AND FOUGHT ON THE FRONT LINE. LARGE RATS WERE EVERYWHERE
AND SO WAS THE STENCH OF DEATH.**

James Walsh: //On the battle of the outpost and on hill 440 there were dead Chinese everywhere. And dead GIs. I saw my first dead GIs on the outpost. There were 5 or 6 guys side by side. They looked like they were taking a nap and there was one of the GIs on his knees right there by him as if he were praying for em. And they were dead. // This was in August, it was extraordinarily warm. It wouldn't take long for bloat to occur, the smell, its incredible. It's as if you're walking on the roadside in the states and there's some dead critter been hit by a car for four of five days// the stench just hits you.

[SFX]

James Walsh: 1020 //we had moved up this first day to take the hill and halfway up there we were going through a Chinese trench and we had a brand new soldier, a guy named Driscombs out of Pennsylvania, who like all first time combat troops would have an occasion to look and see where the enemy 75 was coming from. And he got hit with a piece of shrapnel, right in the head and that was that. First day in combat Second and third day we were relieved by our second and third battalion and for whatever reason, we were sent back up there on the fourth day. The incoming rounds, mortar and artillery was just phenomenal. And one came in, boom, hit my position and threw me out of the hole against the back trench. // and I looked and I couldn't hear a sound. But I was covered with blood. And I was feeling all over to see where I was hit 'cause I couldn't feel it, I couldn't feel it, I couldn't figure out where the blood came from. I looked to my left and Patrishka from Charlie Company and he was dead and I looked to my right and there was Christie from Charlie company, he was dead. And it was their blood that was all over me now. It hits you very, very strangely. You're mad, glad, sad, all at the same time. Your mad that it occurred and you want to kill the enemy, sad that it occurred to somebody else, and extraordinarily, despite the fact that two close buddies were killed, you feel glad...glad it wasn't you.

AFTER THE HORRORS OF WAR IN KOREA, IT WAS WALSH'S TIME TO COME HOME.

James Walsh: At that time in '52, they had come up with a rotation system. That if you were a combat infantryman up front you got four points a month; you know a point a week. So when you got to 36 points, you were eligible for rotation. // Guys in continual battle and doing long time start to become quite conscious of the points they have and become a little more careful as to what they're doing. Their bunkers are deeper and they're re-enforced with logs, (chuckles) sandbags three or four deep because you know you got 34, 36 points to pull off.

// I had my points, actually over 36 and they said okay, they cut my orders and pulled me off the hill and that perhaps is the biggest thrill in the world. It has a dual kind of reaction. One, you're leaving guys that you've been with for three, four, five, six, seven, eight months, knowing full well that hopefully they'll survive and they'll come out. Two, you're so delighted to have lived and survived and that you're going off that hill that off you went. I walked off without any hesitation; just walked down and turned around and said goodbye guys. One of the delightful things was two weeks back on the boat. It was two weeks coming over on the boat which seemed to take forever. But the two weeks going back was just heaven.

James Walsh: When we pulled into the Presidio and the ship docked, I think every GI in the ship, I don't know how many there were, I'm guessing three or four thousand of us, had just all come out of Korea and everybody went to the same side and looked down and said, "Oh Boy." The Red Cross is going to be there. There's going to be a band, USO, donuts, whatever. Nothing. Nothing! Absolutely nothing down there! No band. No music. Nothing.

Mike Perry: Once you get into the Korean period, most of the folks in the US wanted to go about their lives.

ARMY HISTORIAN MIKE PERRY

Mike Perry 636 cont': And we keep on describing the Korean War as the Forgotten War and most of the service members who came back from that War - there was no parades... Partly because of the way the units rotated back. They didn't rotate so much as big mass formations, but they rotated as individuals. You saw the same pattern with the Vietnam War - again a lot of individual rotations, so coming home was a little bit different.

[Music in]

**U.S. MARINE CORPS HISTORIAN FRED ALLISON RECOUNTS THAT
VIETNAM VETS WERE VICTIMS OF AN UNPOPULAR WAR.**

Fred Allison: They didn't see like today, whether people like what's going on in Iraq or not, they seem to always qualify what they're saying about the war with 'we support the troops.' And they didn't do that in Vietnam. They identified the troops with the war itself. It was a bad war so they were bad.

**FRED ALLISON ALSO SAYS THAT SOLDIERS RETURNING FROM
VIETNAM WERE NOT GIVEN ENOUGH TIME TO MAKE THE TRANSITION
TO LIFE BACK HOME.**

Fred Allison: Vietnam veterans might have had a harder time adjusting to civilian life because there's the extreme examples of a soldier or marine coming right out of the jungle, literally, the bush as it was called, put on an airplane and the next day be back in San Francisco walking through the airport. You can just imagine it would be a tremendous cultural shift that would take a lot to handle psychologically.

[SFX: helicopters]

**JEANNE MARKLE NURSED WOUNDED SOLDIERS AS A YOUNG FIRST
LIEUTENANT IN THE 93RD E-VACUATION HOSPITAL IN VIETNAM. IT
WAS A HARD JOB WITH SEEMINGLY ENDLESS DAYS.**

Markle: They were 12 hour shifts a day and six days a week. And sometimes you even worked on your day off if the census was very high. And the helicopters after we opened came in all the time everyday. It was a busy hospital. We got a lot of injured.

**MARKLE'S HUSBAND, BRIAN, WAS ALSO STATIONED IN VIETNAM AS AN
OFFICER IN CHARGE OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND LOGISTICS. SHE
BECAME PREGNANT AND WHEN THE HEAT AND THE PRESSURES OF
WORKING IN A COMBAT HOSPITAL BECAME UNBEARABLE, THE**

MARKLES DID THEIR BEST TO GET THE MOTHER-TO-BE HOME TO THE STATES. BUT IT WASN'T EASY.

Brian Markle: There was a problem with paperwork and it was lost and had to be re-done and she had to go see the group commander.

Jeanne Markle: They weren't concerned about getting me out of the country at all. And they weren't concerned that the paper work was not done correctly either and so I waited and waited. And they wouldn't let me go back to work. So I sat in the hooch all day waiting on this to be done and finally, I waited as long as I could possibly wait. And I asked to see the, who was it honey.

Brian Markle: I don't know... It was the sixty-eighth medical commander

Jeanne Markle: Yes, commander and that took a couple of days of asking over and over again and I finally got in to see him and he made the arrangements to let me fly home on a transport that was used for nobody but the injured soldiers. So I guess I was pregnancy injured.

THE JOURNEY HOME WAS FULL OF REMINDERS OF HER DAY-TO-DAY WARTIME WORK.

Jeanne Markle: That was a very emotional time for me. I had just left Brian in Viet Nam and he wasn't going to be coming home for the birth of our baby. And there I am in this belly of this airplane with more than 100 injured soldiers and that's what I did over there. I took care of those boys and I couldn't get away from it. It was there all the way home. And so I was pretty depressed on the trip home.

SITTING AMONG THE WOUNDED WAS A CONSTANT REMINDER OF THE PAIN AND SUFFERING OF WAR.

Jeanne Markle: Right across from me there was a blond headed young man, couldn't have been more than twenty and he had lost both arms and he was also blind. And he just laid there quietly the whole trip, but at mealtime, of course the Air Force nurse came with the tray and knelt down beside him and fed him and it was very emotional for me to watch him. I kept thinking, 'oh this poor boy. How is he going to get through life like this?' I thought, gee if he wasn't blind, he'd see the spoon coming. Or maybe since he's blind if he had his hand, he could feed himself, but this boy was blind with no hands and he didn't know where the spoon was coming from. And I watched her try to touch his

cheek with the spoon so he could turn that way like a new baby to learn to eat again. It was very, very sad.

[Music button]

BRIAN MARKLE REMEMBERS THAT HIS RETURN TO THE STATES WAS BITTERSWEET.

Brian Markle: I had a chartered airplane. It was a big airplane. It had I don't know how many GIs on it. And it landed at Fort Dix, so I came back through Philadelphia. And that was in December of 1967. The main thing I can remember about that flight is that just as it started to taxi down the runway and started to lift off, the most wonderful cheer from everybody just exploded and everybody started singing, "I'm leaving on a jet plane." I don't think they stopped for twenty minutes.

[Music: *I'm Leaving on a Jet Plane*]

NAVY HISTORIAN DAVE WINKLER

For a lot of those guys in Vietnam the thrill was actually lifting off from the airport. Knowing that all that heat and everything is behind you and that you're out of there and on your way home, I think for those folks, my understanding is that's where the exhilarating... and usually there would be cheering, claps, applause, knowing that you're homeward bound.

[Music cue: softens to lead into a more "sad" recount of coming home]

Jeanne Markle: Coming home wasn't a happy experience at all.

JEANNE MARKLE

Jeanne Markle: Not only did I have my own difficulties to face, I had a nation to face that didn't even want to know about me. They told me not to wear my uniform home. Just to pack it up in my suitcase and wear my civilian clothes home. // I faced people all along the way of my homecoming that didn't even want to know where I came from or what I'd been doing. And I could tell that right away. // And we had lived through news bulletins and all the demonstrations. We knew that we weren't appreciated at all. And so it was a very different homecoming than some of your Second World War veterans had gotten. I didn't talk about it. I even came home to Indiana to a small farming community of 400 people in Northern Indiana and they were glad to say hi to me and they didn't ask me anything. It all bottled up inside of me for many many years.

[THEME MUSIC IN]

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[MUSIC OUT]

TREVOR SWETT WAS THE BATTALION COMMANDER FOR THE 5TH BATTALION, 7TH CAVALRY IN VIETNAM. WHILE MONITORING THE TROOPS ON THE GROUND FROM HIS HELICOPTER, HE REMEMBERS ONE INCIDENT WHEN A MEDIVAC WAS URGENTLY NEEDED AND NOT IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE. HE DECIDED TO GO DOWN AND HELP.

Trevor Swett: My helicopter was running low on fuel and I knew I was going to have to go back and have it refueled. We left the alert for the medical helicopters that the medics were able to use but there were a couple of pretty wounded people down on the ground so I took the risk of having our helicopter go down and pick them up. And that was probably in a sense a stupid risk cause we were under fire on the way down and on the way up. But I was able to go help a couple of soldiers get into the helicopter and we were able to medivac them. Sort of an interesting follow up to that is...as I recall, I got two soldiers and lifted them into the helicopter. I've had about twenty of them tell me that they remembered me doing it for them, and obviously I didn't.

AFTER THE WAR, COLONEL SWETT JOINED THESE MEN AT THEIR FIRST REUNION. HE WITNESSED THE HEALING EFFECTS THESE GATHERINGS HAVE ON VETERANS WHO COPE WITH THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AFTERMATH OF WAR.

Trevor Swett: This one fella came through and he didn't look very good, and when I introduced myself to him, he sort of nodded and I could tell that he wasn't being very communicative // It turned out that he had received a head wound. And as a result of the head wound, he lost all his memory, couldn't remember how he got it. Couldn't

remember anything about his childhood. // And I noticed the next night when we had our battalion banquet that he was engaged. He was really motivated because we start our battalion banquets// getting up and asking everyone (emotional pause) to turn to his right, say welcome home. (his voice breaks with emotion) Turn to his left, say welcome home. We had a heck of a reunion, we really did. And this fellow was appropriately moved. I could see he was really starting to enjoy himself. But he still couldn't remember his childhood. The next day after lunch he went up to take a nap and he dreamed. His mother had spent much time trying to show him pictures of fishing trips that he and his Dad had taken together and other pictures of Mom and Dad and this fella. And he never could react to it. But he had a dream. He dreamed of them and when he woke up, he remembered it all. It was an emotional moment for all of us.

[Music under]

WAR NOT ONLY WOUNDS THE BODY, BUT SCARS THE MIND. SOLDIERS COME HOME WITH NIGHTMARISH MEMORIES FROM THE BATTLEFIELD. U.S. SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL AND HIS BROTHER TOM WALKED SIDE BY SIDE AS SQUAD LEADERS WITH THE U.S. ARMY'S 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION IN VIETNAM.

Chuck Hagel: We were on an ambush patrol. We knew that VC had been in this area and we were walking through a very dense jungle and we were crossing a stream and my brother Tom and I had been walking "point."

WALKING POINT MEANT THAT YOU WERE UP FRONT AND YOU WERE THE MAIN TARGET OF THE BAD GUYS. WALKING POINT ALSO MEANT YOU WERE PROTECTING OTHER SOLDIERS FROM BOOBY TRAPS AND LAND MINES... THE SOLDIERS WALKING POINT WERE THE MOST AT RISK.

Chuck Hagel: My platoon had had the point position and Tom and I had been out on point most of the day and the company commander, Captain Davis, rotated my squad back to the second position squad and they moved up a squad. About an hour later, we were crossing a stream, and one of the point guys hit a trip wire in the stream...there were large claymore mines that had been placed in the trees, and so when that trip wire was hit, the claymores exploded and took down the guys in front of us...and hit me with shrapnel in the chest and Tom got shrapnel in his arms and I think some of his chest. The Captain came to us and said "Can you guys make it?" We said, "Yes, we can". So he said, "Can you get back on point and lead us out". So Tom and I were wounded but we

got back on point and I was as afraid as I think I've ever been because it was dark and when it gets dark, it is dark, and how many more booby traps are you going to walk into that you really can't see. We almost hit another one...my brother Tom saved us.

**IN ANOTHER INCIDENT, THE HAGEL BROTHERS WERE ON A BRIDGE
SECURITY DETAIL WHEN THEIR VEHICLE HIT AND DENONATED A 500
LB MINE.**

Chuck Hagel: The fire came up the side and hit me up and down my left side...burnt my face and arms...my brother Tom was unconscious because of the concussion // ...we took the earphones off him. He had blood running out of his ears, and his nose. I didn't know if he was dead. // and I'd been hit with shrapnel and burnt my face, and both eardrums of mine were blown out as well. Until we could clear the area, they could not bring the choppers in to bring the wounded out. And so I'll never forget, they took Tom and me out ...Tom was burned a little bit too. I was burned pretty bad...they put the salve on me, all over my face, and my arms and they wrapped us up in a blanket and put us on another APC and took us on down the road where we could secure things...//And they did give us some shots but the pain was pretty bad and I sitting on that track, another track, waiting for the dust off to come and the medical evacuation... and thinking to myself, "If I ever get out of all this, I am going to do everything I can do to assure that war is the LAST resort that we a nation, a people, calls upon to settle a dispute. The horror of it, the pain, the suffering of it...people don't understand it if they haven't been through it...There's no glory, only suffering in war.

[Music button]

**ANDREW KISTLER WAS CHIEF OF THE CONSTRUCTION SECTION FOR
45TH DIVISION'S SIGNAL CORPS. WHILE LAYING COMMUNICATION
LINES SOMEWHERE NEAR THE 38TH PARALLEL IN KOREA, HE TRIPPED
A LAND MINE. THE EXPLOSION PROPELLED HIM INTO THE AIR.**

Andrew Kistler: // When the land mine exploded, I saw my left leg over in the field in front of me...my right arm was shot...I didn't lose my arm but the clothing was shot away or blown away. And I could see blood. And when I lifted my right hand, I noticed that my little finger was on a muscle or tendon or something and it was hanging down several inches from my hand. The other leg, I was able to try to lift it up. And when I did I saw that my toe was where my heel should be.

THE SUB- ZERO TEMPERATURE FROZE KISTLER'S BLOOD AND KEPT HIM FROM BLEEDING TO DEATH BEFORE A HELICOPTER TOOK HIM TO A HOSPITAL. HE NEEDED TRANFUSIONS OF 80 PINTS OF BLOOD. THROUGH EXCRUCIATING PAIN, HE MANAGED TO STAY ALIVE. WHEN HE WAS WELL ENOUGH, HE WAS FIRST TRANSFERRED TO A HOSPITAL IN HAWAII, THEN TO CALIFORNIA, AND FINALLY TO THE WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER IN WASHINGTON, DC. HIS WIFE JOINED HIM THERE.

Andrew Kistler: Apparently, when the landmine blew up there was ice and snow and dirt that probably blew into my eyes and I could see, but all I could see was like a shadow. I could tell there was somebody moving but I couldn't tell if it was a man or a woman until they spoke. And that's what happened when I saw her in Walter Reed. She stayed there all the time I was in the hospital and on weekends my parents and her parents came down to visit with us.

KISTLER HAS HIGH PRAISE FOR THE MEDICAL PERSONNEL WHO HELPED HIM. AND IF YOU ASK HIM IF IT WAS DIFFICULT TO COME HOME TO A NEW LIFE WITH DISABILITIES, HE'LL SAY THAT A PROMISE PULLED HIM THROUGH.

Andrew Kistler: All I said was I would crawl around the world if I could live and I lived. So I had no real problems adjusting to anything once I knew I was going to be alive.

WITH HIS GROUP OF 30 SOLDIERS IN KOREA, PLATOON LEADER TREVOR SWETT HAD THE DAUNTING MISSION OF SEIZING AND HOLDING THE CREST OF BATTLE MOUNTAIN.

Trevor Swett: We succeeded in taking it and as I was reorganizing the position on the top of Battle Mountain, the N. Koreans counterattacked - under a barrage.

[Music in]

I was hit by actually a mortar round - Relatively small thankfully. It landed on my left hip and exploded and there were five of us in this little hole that we were using as sort of a command post. Four of them were killed outright. And I thought I was a goner too. Actually when I noticed the North Korean fingerprints coming over the military crest of the hill in front of me...though I thought my back was broken, I figured out that I could roll down a hill and I did roll down to find some cover with shrubbery; got behind it; found my medic there. He noticed a rather gaping wound on the left side of me and began to do something with my first aid pack when the North Koreans saw us and took us under fire and he left in a hurry and I got a couple more bullets.

FORTUNATELY, THE NORTH KOREANS DID NOT LOOK FOR SWETT.

PERHAPS THEY ASSUMED HE WAS DEAD. HE CRAWLED ON HIS BELLY TO REACH HIS SOLDIERS. IN THE EXPLOSION, HE LOST HIS HELMET.

Swett: Didn't have a helmet, picked one up; thought that would help; cause I proceeded off and on towards where I hoped the troops were and heard the click of an M1 rifle going forward with the safety off ready to fire and heard one of them say "Here comes one of them now". Turns out that I had picked up a North Korean helmet. They saw that North Korean helmet and thought I was a North Korean trying to sneak up on them and perhaps they thought I was one of them but I managed to convince them I was Lt Swett and eventually got back to the area where Colonel Corley, the Battalion Commander was.

LT. SWETT WAS THROWN ON THE HOOD OF A JEEP AND DRIVEN QUICKLY TO A MOBILE ARMY SURGICAL HOSPITAL. WHEN HE GOT THERE, HE SAW A SCENE THAT LOOKED LIKE IT WAS RIGHT OUT OF THE TV SHOW, MASH.

Swett: As we turned the corner into an area, I saw a softball game going on between people on the MASH unit staff. They saw the jeep come round the bend and I swear the ball stopped in mid-air as did the bat and they surrounded the jeep.

We were quickly taken off and into a schoolhouse which was the MASH hospital and put on the floor for triage and the young captain came up and looked at me and said "son, I'm probably going to have to take your leg." I said, "That's OK, I'm alive."

LT. SWETT DIDN'T LOSE HIS LEG. HE ENDED UP ON A SHIP HEADED TO JAPAN WHERE HE STAYED IN THE HOSPITAL FOR QUITE AWHILE. WHEN HE RETURNED TO THE STATES, HE HAD AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

Trevor Swett: I was well received when I got back to Walter Reed. It just happened that Miss America was visiting Walter Reed that day - as we were on stretchers waiting assignment to a ward, Miss America came up and gave me a great big kiss - I can't think of a better way to return home.

(30 MINUTE IDENTIFIER WITH MUSIC UNDER)

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[BEGIN PART TWO]

[Music transition]

Walter Morris: I was scared to death to get out of the service because I went in as a kid and I had never been on my own because the army was always there.

WALTER MORRIS WAS ONE OF THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARATROOPERS IN THE AIRBORNE INFANTRY DURING WORLD WAR II.

Walter Morris: We had a fine group of men and they were all focused on the same thing as proving not only to themselves but to the world that colored troops were no different than white troops. If you had it, you had it whether you were white, black blue or green. They were all dedicated to prove that proposition that all men were created equal.

MORRIS BECAME FIRST SERGEANT OF THE 555th PARACHUTE INFANTRY COMPANY -THE FIRST ALL-BLACK PARACHUTE COMPANY. AFTER 5 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE U.S. ARMY, AND TO HIS MEN, IT WAS TIME FOR MORRIS TO RETURN HOME.

Walter Morris: Now I'm going to get out in the real world and I was scared to death. But fortunately I had a father who I could depend on. // When we got to Seattle I started to learn how to lay brick. And the union at that time when my father went down to get me in the union they said rather than give your son an apprentice card, we're going to make him a full bricklayer. Cause he's a serviceman. I had my uniform on. That upset my father and all the other bricklayers. Because now my father had to pay me the union scale and I wasn't worth the union scale. I wasn't even worth the brick. And then the other bricklayers had to work next to me and I didn't know what the hell I was doing but I was making the same thing as they were making. So, they wouldn't help me either. And for a couple of weeks there, it was really tough. They wouldn't eat with me. They wouldn't teach me anything. But finally they came around. Everything worked out alright.

102 YR-OLD FRANK WOODRUFF BUCKLES WAS A CORPORAL IN AN ARMY AMBULANCE UNIT IN WORLD WAR ONE. AFTER BEING OVER SEAS FOR TWO YEARS, HE CAME HOME TO A VERY DIFFERENT LIFE.

Frank Buckles: I changed a great deal. So did other soldiers change. There were a million men all at once back in civilian life. I just didn't have any connection with the civilian people. // Even though I didn't talk about it and didn't discuss it with people I knew that // I was entirely different. When I came back, not associating with anyone but the military. And I knew that it was the best thing for me to do is to get out of that atmosphere. Not to continue to talk about it. To get out on my own.

ALVIN DICKSON CAME HOME FROM WORLD WAR II BUT COULDN'T REALLY LEAVE IT BEHIND.

Alvin Dickson: For a couple of years after I got out of the service in the early days, I was having a lot of nightmares. I don't think I could have talked to you like this some years ago. I didn't talk to anybody about it because I just want to put it out of my mind. //When I was in the house at night, I would want all of the drapes closed because just like on the battlefield if they can see you and you can't see them you're in the disadvantage. And so you want the drapes closed, you want more lights on. It's got to affect men that come back. You can't help it.

[SFX]

Corbin Willis: November 2, 1944 I was shot down. You only have about 30 seconds with all your tanks being empty, more or less empty of gas, if the wings on fire, before the plane will blow up. So there wasn't any choice but to bail out.

US AIRFORCE CO-PILOT 2ND LIEUTENANT CORBIN WILLIS AND CREW WERE SHOT DOWN OVER DUSSELDORF, GERMANY. THE GERMAN ARMY TOOK ALL SURVIVORS AS PRISONERS. SOME WERE BADLY INJURED.

Willis: One of them, his face was so badly burned, they used the oil from one of the cowlings smeared it put cross his face and put a handkerchief across his face cause the wind was just driving him crazy. They were put in the same truck we were in and then we got to the Cologne County Jail and the Germans pointed at the five of us and said Americainish. We were taken separately from the RAF. We were put in separate cells. They were concrete cells maybe eight by ten. Absolutely nothing in it. Just a postage stamp light coming in it from higher up. And they had a single bulb in the center of it. They brought in a bail of hay for me to sleep on. And then took me over to the officers club and they fed me a late snack. And it consisted of blood sausage. The bread was made from sawdust and potatoes. And this is the kind of bread that you could store for months at a warehouse. It tasted like rye crisp is what it tastes like. We had this all through POW camp. // And they had margarine made out of coal. Then they had their coffee which was made out of acorns. And so everything I had was synthetic, except the blood sausage.

TOWARD THE END OF WAR, PRISONERS IN THE CAMP WERE HARDLY GIVEN ANY FOOD AT ALL. BY THE TIME THEY WERE LIBERATED BY

**GENERAL GEORGE PATTON, THEIR STOMACHS WERE BADLY
DAMAGED.**

Corbin Willis: Patton came in and looked us all over and so forth and then he saw that we were in bad condition because we hadn't had any food for quite some time. I was down to 125 pounds. And he said, 'they're all going to have a square meal tonight out of our rations.' And they took him inside and said, 'that would kill 'em.' He said, 'what are they used to' and they said "soup" and so we had one of the richest soups I ever had and I couldn't even keep water on my stomach after that bowl of soup. It was so rich. Then they sent in of all things the Red Cross came in with coffee and donuts and that killed some of them . . . and they brought in some candy bars and that killed some of them. So then they said "you're going to have to get them out of here as quickly as possible because we can't feed them this way." But anyway we then boarded planes and flew to Le Havre France Camp Lucky Strike and there they fed us 13 types of rice. Rice is the most easy of all foods to digest. And so they expanded our stomach and of course we were able to digest.

**THE NEW DIET THE P.O.W.'S WERE GIVEN GAVE THEM STRENGTH AND
AS SOON AS THEY WERE PHYSICALLY ABLE, THEY BOARDED A SHIP
FOR HOME.**

[Music under "Don't Fence Me In"]

Corbin Willis: When we got to the port we were met with fire boats that were spraying and there was a big sign on the side of the wharf saying welcome home POWs. A band played for us. They played *Candy* and *Don't Fence Me In*, which I thought was appropriate for POW's.

**CORBIN WILLIS HAD GOTTEN MARRIED ONLY EIGHTEEN DAYS
BEFORE HE WAS SHIPPED OVERSEAS. THERE WAS NO WAY FOR HIM TO
COMMUNICATE WITH HIS WIFE WHILE HE WAS IN THE PRISON CAMP.
THERE WAS NO WAY HE COULD KNOW THAT SHE'D GIVEN UP HOPE.**

Corbin Willis: I called my folks and I got my mother and she did not know I was alive so the telephone operator had to convince her and then she started balling. Finally when I

get a word in edgewise which was about 10 or 11 minutes later I finally asked where my wife was and she said she was remarried and has started a family.

[Music button]

Marion Gurfein: After 3 years they were actually going to let him come home for 4 weeks.

WAR WIVES LIKE MARION GURFEIN ANXIOUSLY AWAITED THEIR HUSBANDS' RETURN.

Marion Gurfein: Can you believe what it was like in 1945? You know, how the girls are going crazy because their husbands are gone for a few months. Well I waited almost three years for Joe. And then to have 30 days with him. So we were all up in the living room sitting there. Joe's parents, my mother, my sisters. And I heard the elevator come up. Look at me, I'm still trembling. And I ran out into the hall and ran over to the elevator and the door opened and there was Joe and I guess that was one of the greatest moments of my life. I mean, we fell into each other's arms. And I can't remember exactly what we said, but took him back and presented him with this beautiful little girl.

THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME JOE GURFEIN ACTUALLY MET HIS DAUGHTER, MARJORIE. HE HAD WITNESSED HER EVERY MOVE, THOUGH, THROUGH THE MANY LETTERS AND CARDS FROM HIS WIFE. MRS. GURFEIN HAD EVEN CREATED A FAMILY NEWSLETTER, COMPLETE WITH ILLUSTRATIONS. SHE SENT IT FAITHFULLY EVERY MONTH. JOE KEPT EVERY SINGLE ONE.

RUTHIE WOODMAN REMEMBERS WHAT IT WAS LIKE WHEN HER HUSBAND WAS AWAY DURING WORLD WAR II.

Ruthie Woodman: Oh Golly seemed to me like I was always waiting for word.

[Music under "You and Your Love"]

He left on March 22, our third wedding anniversary – he left for Europe and had some training in England and I heard from him but then there became a period of about four or five weeks when I didn't hear and so I was sure that something was about to happen and it was – it was D-Day. And, we didn't hear anything for quite a while. And then the first I heard going to the post office at that time and there was an overseas letter in the mailbox, and I was scared to open the mailbox. But it was a letter from Evie and it was a letter he had given to a friend to take to England to mail to the States! I don't know I guess I knew everything was going to be all right.

**NAVY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER EVERETT WOODMAN READS THAT
LETTER HE HAD WRITTEN TO RUTHIE FROM A FOXHOLE ON OMAHA
BEACH.**

Everett Woodman: God bless you honey. I know you would want to be at the beach and that that was where I wanted you to be there--with your folks. I am still OK dear and recently had a bath which means a lot after the three weeks in the dirt and dust and mud in one set of clothes. The time will come when you can laugh at it all, and remember only the parts we want to remember. I love you a little more than usual and by tomorrow it will still be a little more. As for matters of interest, I haven't seen anything of La Belle France, for my horizon has been limited by a foxhole and a tent. Goodnight for now my sweet my darling. I love you all over and something awful. Chins up. We'll get there. Your loving Evie.

[Music out]

**YOU'RE LISTENING TO *COMING HOME* FROM PRI, PUBLIC RADIO
INTERNATIONAL**

Dave Winkler: Mail call was one of the most exciting things for troops overseas. You now have e-mail.

NAVY HISTORIAN DAVE WINKLER

[sfx – internet sound]

Dave Winkler: And email has really changed a dynamic. You now have soldiers and marines in the field who can get on the internet, and they can be helping their kids with their homework... // On the other hand, one of the problems with email is that // it used to be if there was a problem at home and there was a real crisis, you would contact the American Red Cross. They would send a cablegram to the ship. The ship would get it passed down to that individual's division officer or the chaplain. The chaplain would sit

down with that individual. With email, that's all circumvented and suddenly you have this sailor who might be shocked with the death of a loved one or something and nobody is understanding what's going on with this kid.

**GUNNERY SERGEANT TOMIKA PERDOMO IS AN IMAGERY ANALYST
FOR THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS. SHE SERVED IN THE
PERSIAN GULF WAR. FOR HER, EMAIL WAS AN ASSET.**

Tomika Perdomo: As a mom, I needed to hear their voices. I needed to know that everything at home was ok. So it wasn't a distraction for me. Now some of my male counterparts felt like it was a little bit of a distraction I think that's when the gender thing come in – we handle things a little differently –the men knew that their wives at home were taking care of things. They weren't worried about it. Me, on the other hand, I was really concerned, so I needed to email or call to hear something back from them to let me know they were ok. That way I could focus on what I had to do for the Marine Corps.

**GUNNERY SERGEANT PERDOMO REMEMBERS WHEN SHE RECEIVED
HER FIRST ASSIGNMENT TO THE PERSIAN GULF. IT WAS 16 YEARS AGO.
SHE AGONIZED OVER WHETHER TO GO.**

Tomika Perdomo: Because as a single parent, they gave me the option to either go or not to go. If I went, of course I had to have someone watch him if I did not go, I had to face the choice of being processed out of the Marine Corps. Very hard decision for me at the time so I called my mother so she could help me out a little bit. And her words were basically “ Did you sign the paper? Did you sign the contract, Tomika?” I said, “Yes ma'am”, and she said, “Well, then you know what you have to do then.”

**SHE LEFT HER SON JULIAN WITH A TRUSTED FRIEND NAMED MAXINE
MOMANY. WHEN PERDOMO CAME HOME, JULIAN LOOKED VERY
DIFFERENT.**

Perdomo: He was so big. And I looked at him and I'm thinking, “Wow Maxine, what have you been feeding my son, you know?” He was so big and he looked so good. I wanted to hold him but I didn't want to just push myself on him because he was so young, and he probably didn't remember who I was anyway. Even though 4 months to me is a short time but for a baby I'm sure it was a pretty long time to not be with your

Mom. So I reached out for him, he was in her arms, and he kind of looked at me like “God, I think I know this lady” but he didn’t come to me immediately. He held on to Maxine. And I understood. I really did. (Gets emotional) Wow. Whew. And um.. it really kind of hurt ... but um... I understood. I let her hold him and I just looked at him and I told that I love him... and that’s pretty much how it was coming home... really happy but kind of bittersweet because you know, you want your baby to know you and to reach out for you. And it kind of didn’t happen that way and I understood.

IT TOOK JULIAN A WHILE TO GET USED TO HIS MOTHER. IN TIME, THEY STARTED THEIR NEW LIFE AS A FAMILY. BUT FOR MANY FAMILIES, THERE IS NO HOMECOMING AND NO REUNION. MARION GURFEIN REMEMBERS WHAT MANY WAR WIVES WENT THROUGH DURING WORLD WAR II.

Marion Gurfein: I was living in a world with all women. And we used to sit in the park. And every now and then a telegram would arrive. And it was either missing in action, or dead, and you didn’t know what to say to your friends when this happened. So if it was missing in action, you’d say to them, oh well, maybe after the War. He’s someplace and he can’t get in touch with you. But maybe some day you’re going to find him again. It was a pretty scary scary time.

BRIAN MARKLE WAS AN ARMY SURVIVAL ASSISTANCE OFFICER DURING THE WAR IN VIETNAM.

[Music under]

Brian Markle: My job was to start setting the things in motion before that escort who came back with the deceased to first notify the next of kin// My job was to take a prepared speech and go to the home of the mother or wife or whatever and notify them on behalf of the secretary of the army that their next of kin was either killed in action or missing in action and give them as much details as he had given me. // I remember driving up the main street and turning into a housing edition and their street was the first street on the right and the first house on that street. We parked the car and the door slammed and it was probably 6:30 or quarter to seven and you know everybody in the neighborhood was watching. You could just feel it. And I no sooner shut the door of the car, I went around to the front of the car and I could just hear crying from the house. // I just broke down. I said I have to wait here a minute.// finally we went to the door and you have this prepared speech and on my first one my prepared speech just went out the window and// it was hard.

Dr. Tsuneishi: My name is Warren Tsuneishi. I was born on July 4, 1921 in Monrovia, California. // I've always had this self-image of myself as a Yankee Doodle Dandy born on the 4th of July. // #3 When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor I was outraged that Japan would have the temerity to attack us. // There was no way Japan could succeed in such a war. But I was also angry because of what it did to me personally.// I could see exactly what was coming down the road.

**DURING WORLD WAR TWO, WARREN TSUNEISHI WAS SENT TO A
RELOCATION CAMP BECAUSE HE WAS OF JAPANESE DESCENT.**

Dr. Tsuneishi: We reported to this Methodist church, loaded aboard buses and our contingent part of the Berkeley con was sent to what they call assembly center...it was the Tamparon racetrack just north of Palo Alto, California, that had been converted to a holding center...there was already barbed wire. They converted their horse stalls to living quarters for families, and there was an enormous grandstand and underneath the grandstand was a huge cavernous room and that's where they put bachelors like me.// We were called potential saboteurs, a fifth column, spies, hidden agents of the Imperial Japanese government – all that kind of stuff –it was *devastating* to be thought of that way.

**DESPITE THE INSULTING TREATMENT AND THE FACT THAT HE LOST
HIS HOME, HIS BELONGINGS AND HIS FREEDOM, HE STILL
VOLUNTEERED FOR THE US ARMY TO SERVE AS A JAPANESE
LANGUAGE SPECIALIST IN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE.**

Dr. Tsuneishi: We studied the Japanese war manuals, the military Japanese, learned how to read maps and Japanese military tactics, strategy and so forth, in addition to the language.

The Japanese Imperial Army was very careless about its documents. We captured tons of documents, some of them classified, some of them classified top secret. I believe, I think it's a general feeling that the Japanese really didn't think that anyone could read these documents. One of the documents I remember translating was the whole battle plan for the defense of the Islands. If you can imagine top secret documents...and we stayed up all night translating them so we knew exactly what their mission was, what their objective was, what they were up to and so forth.

THOUGH HE IS PROUD OF HIS WORK, TSUNEISHI HAS MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT THE WAR, THE DROPPING OF THE ATOMIC BOMB, THE WAY JAPANESE AMERICANS WERE TREATED. BUT THROUGH IT ALL, HIS PATRIOTISM ENDURES.

Tsuneishi: That is my credo. That is my belief in this country. No matter what it may have done to me in terms of racial discrimination, I never lost my hopes for this country. I never lost the dream of an America that in the long run would live up to its ideals.

[Music under]

THESE STORIES ARE THE LEGACY OF WAR. THEY PROVIDE A WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEX LAYERS OF AMERICAN HISTORY.

Dr. Billington: This collection means a great deal to the Library because we're supposed to be, and in many ways are... the national memory.

DR. JAMES H. BILLINGTON IS THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS.

And, there is nothing more traumatic, more important, and more... I would say less understood in a deep sense than the wartime experience...we read about it now in the memoirs of the great, but what we don't have is the picture of the experiences of the ordinary people who participated in these wars.

FOR ANYONE OUT THERE LISTENING, IF THEY WANT TO MAKE A VETERAN FEEL GOOD, JUST SAY "WELCOME HOME BROTHER OR SISTER – THANKS FOR YOUR SERVICE – I LOVE YA". GIVE EM A BIG HUG. THAT'S ALL THEY REALLY WANT. THEY DON'T WANT TO BE LOOKED AT AS HEROES OR RECIPEINTS OF MEDALS AND THAT KIND OF STUFF. THEY KNOW THE REAL HEROES NEVER MADE IT BACK. AND

WHETHER THEY KNOW THEY'RE LUCKY TO BE BACK – OR WHETHER THEY DON'T FEEL THAT THEY'RE LUCKY IN BEING BACK – THEY'RE BACK. AND THEY GOTTA DEAL WITH THAT. AND IN DEALING WITH IT, WE CAN ALL HELP JUST A LITTLE BY JUST ACCEPTING THEM AND SAYING THANK YOU –AND WE LOVE YOU.

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WE ARE ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL TO ALL THE VETERANS WHO SHARED THEIR STORIES AND ENCOURAGED MANY OTHERS TO DO SO.

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BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT, AMERICAN
FOLKLIFE CENTER, AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. I'M MAX
CLELAND.**

[MUSIC OUT – END]

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